

In Opposition to an Act Implementing the Governor's Proposed Budget Recommendations for Mental Health and
Addiction Services (DMHAS)

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February 23, 2017

Hello to Senators Osten and Formica, Representatives Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Danielle Herbert. I am testifying on HB 7027. I am a registered voter from West Hartford, a seventeen-year employee of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board, a family member of someone who had a severe mental health disability and **I am opposed** to the proposed elimination to the Regional Mental Health Boards (RMHBs). Over 42 years ago, the state Legislature created a statute (Sec. 17a-484) to advise DMHAS by evaluating state funded mental health services. This invaluable work has helped countless people experience a better system of care during the most difficult times in their lives. The RMHBs many recommendations have saved the money over the years by helping the facilities that rely on state funding streamline their programs in an efficient and effective way and in a way that empowers the individuals that are receiving those services. This work is carried out by over 500 volunteer members who are composed of **providers of mental health & addiction services**, clergy, police, social workers, family members, concerned citizens and people in recovery. This dedicated and diverse group of volunteers ensure that a broad wealth of knowledge and experience are utilized in advising DMHAS. It empowers individuals living with mental illness and their families to advocate for themselves, others, and for improvement and efficiency in services. The Regional Boards are vitally essential in safeguarding that services are delivered effectively and efficiently.

My brother lived with a severe mental health disability and unfortunately past away a couple of years ago. I was his trustee, his caretaker and I loved him. I know from experience how the mental health system works and know that without the work of the RMHBs that people like my brother's voice might not be heard.

So, what will the state lose?

- Information collection and priorities development by a large diverse group of **volunteer** citizens.
- Development of community partnerships for solutions on young adult needs, transportation, wellness, and health equity.
- Evaluation and guidance on best practices, consensus building, and coordination of numerous projects through this self-advocating platform.
- **THE RMHBs HELP LEVERAGE \$23M IN FEDERAL FUNDING!**

Oversight is more important during periods of short funds, when services are being reduced, to ensure that services be effectively and efficiently provided. Please do not end the hard work of these small RMHB staffs and the hundreds of unpaid volunteers who have made the system more **efficient and effective**. We know you are making difficult choices but we get feedback on a grassroots level with a 2% paid workforce (10 staff and 500 volunteers), and we help **bring in 23 million dollars to the state**. Why would you consider eliminating a program that helps the people it serves so much, and helps bring in millions of dollars to the state? Please preserve the Regional Mental Health Boards. Thank you all for the opportunity to speak to you about this issue.